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ABSTRACT

The Response to Educational Needs Project (RENP) encompasses a staff of approximately 85 people, operates in 15 schools, functions within the educational and political context of the District of Columbia Public Schools in general and specifically within Region I, works with multiple constituencies, and is directed by several layers of management. It is considered to be important to understand how broad, educational policies are generated for the project and further, how these policies are implemented. There are several potential contributors to the policies which govern RENP, foremost of which is the Anacostia Community School Board. Three policies generated by the RENP committee and approved by the board, served as foci for this study. Those policies are: (1) the Local School Board shall have a direct involvement in their schools' dealings with concerns of importance to their local community; (2) the Anacostia Community School Board shall have a direct involvement in the schools of Region I, dealing with concerns brought to them by the local school boards as being untreatable at the local level; and (3) the Unit Task Forces at each school shall include in their composition at least three parents and one student, to provide direct input from the community to RENP. (Author/JM)

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Three Policies of the Anacostia Community School Board: A Study of Their Intent and Operationalization

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Introduction:

The Response to Educational Needs Project is highly complex: it encompasses a staff of approximately eighty-fivepeople; operates in fifteen schools; functions within the educational and political context of the District of Columbia Public Schools in general, and specifically within Region I; works with multiple constituencies; and, administratively, is directed by several layers of management. Given the inherent intricacies of the program, and the numberous and diverse actors who together comprise the cast of RENP, it becomes important to understand how broad, educational policies are generated for the project, and further, how thesepolicies are "translated" or operationalized into educational action. That is, it is critical for policy makers and funding agencies alike to ascertain the degree of congruence between the intent of the program, as defined by those responsible for generating policy, and the reality of the on-the-ground program.

In the case of RENP, there are several potential contributors to the policies which govern the program. First and foremost of these is, of course, the Anacostia Community School Board (ACSB), which, according to the original program proposal and subsequent continuation proposals is the "major policy-making body" for RENP. There are however, several other formally-constituted groups which should and do impact upon program policies. The RENP committee for example, represents the operationalized involvement, in many cases of the ACSB. This committee, constituted board members is responsible for deciding several policy issues, and for monitoring the project under the aegis of the board. Further, each participating RENP school must, as a prerequisite to its participation, form a Local School Board (LSB), which is responsible for setting the educational policies of its particular school, and as part of its duties, for setting RENP policies idiosynchratic to that school. Finally, each participating school must constitute a Unit Task Force (UTF), which is responsible for the daily monitoring and policy operationalization of RENP within its school.

In many respects, the RENP Committee and the Unit Task Forces serve analogeous functions, the former at a regional level, and the latter at the level of the local schools. They are further similar in that each shares the same mandate of ensuring that broad policy decisions, made by the ACSB are accurately transposed into educational activities.

The purpose of this study is to examine, in a limited fashion, how policies are made, communicated, and operationalized. Given the short duration of the study (about three months), it does not purport to reflect an exhaustive, comprehensive analysis of the program, Rather it focuses upon three broad policy issues and related sub-questions. Therefore, this study should be construed as a preliminary examination of project policy generation and operationlization.

How were the issues to be studied selected?:

The selection of issues to be examined as the foci for this study entailed a three part process. First, the contractor proposed the broad question delineated above; namely, "How do Broad policies become operationalized?" The contractor further suggested that this issue be resolved through the examination of three recent policy decisions made by the board. This suggestion was simultaneously submitted to the National Institute of Education and selected members of the Anacostia Community School Board. Subsequent to the approval by the Institute and Board members, of the major purpose of the study, the contractor reviewed all of the Board minutes for the past two years, to generate a tentative list of policies which might be examined for the study. This list was submitted to the Institute and the Board for simultaneous consideration. After receiving input from Institute and Board personnel, the minutes of the meetings of the RENP committee were culled, and a final list of policy decisions was selected for scrutiny. Thus, the decisions which were ultimately selected reflect issues considered important by both the Institute and the Anacostia Community School Board.

What are the issues that were studied?:

The process described on the previous page culminated in a list of three policies generated by the RENP committee and approved by the Board, which served as foci for this study. Those policies are as follows:

- The Local School Boards shall have a direct involvement in their schools' dealings with concerns of importance to their local community.
- The Anacostia Community School Board shall have a direct involvement in the schools of Region I, dealing with concerns brought to them by the Local School Boards as being untreatable at the local level.
- The Unit Task Forces at each school shall include in their composition at least three parents and one student, to provide direct input from the community to RENP.

While there were several other policy issues that could have been studied, the above were selected for two reasons: first, because, in their aggregate the issues listed above touch upon three of the most critical policy-making and administrative components of the project; the Board, the Local Schools Boards, and the Unit Task Forces.

Organizations of this Report:

The remainder of this report is divided into three sections, each corresponding to one of the policy issues delineated above. Within each section the following kinds of information are presented:

- What does the issue being studied mean in the context of the program?
- What are the sub-issues, if any, which relate to the primary issue?
- Who generated the policies under discussion?
- How were these policies communicated to those affected by them?
- How were the data collected?
- What do the data indicate?
- What preliminary conclusions can be drawn about the issue being examined?
- What are the recommendations, if any for improving the operationalization of similar policies in the future?
- What were the "policy facilitative strategies" present in the implementation of these policies?

Facilitating Successful Implementation of Policies

As mentioned in the introduction, it is the intent of this study to examine three selected policies of the Anacostia Community School Board. Specifically, the study will focus upon the origin of these policies, how they were communicated to those whom they affected, and finally, how they were implemented. The literature on planned educational change suggests that policies which are successfully implemented, that is policies whose operationalization is congruent with the intent of policy makers, share certain characteristics. In other words, previous studies of policy implementation have revealed that there are certain strategies which policy makers can employ to augment the likelihood that their policies will be successfully implemented. Conversely, in those cases in which policies have not been implemented or have been imperfectly implemented, most of these strategies have been absent. In this chapter, we will briefly describe ten strategies which have been used in the past by policy makers to augment the likelihood of successful policy implementation. We hope that these strategies, while not absolute, may provide a context within which the policies analyzed in this study can be examined. In subsequent chapters, we will note which of these "policy facilitating strategies" were present in each of the policy issues examined in this study. These facilitators which are normally present in instances of successful policy implementation have been largely gleaned from three sources. These are as follows: 1) selected literature on planned educational change, 2) our own experience in working with both RENP and other programs, 3) the experience of key staff at the National Institute of Education in working with both RENP and other programs.

The remainder of this chapter will briefly delineate and describe ten such strategies whose efficacy has been tested historically in both RENP and other successful educational change efforts.

Value Orientation of Policies: In an article written in 1961, Robert Chin and Kenneth D. Benne suggest that one characteristic of successfully implemented policies is that the pattern of actions and practice implied by those policies are consistent with the sociocultural norms and committment of those individuals responsible for implementing the policies and most affected by them. Chin and Benne state that policies are most likely to be successfully implemented when the actions called for in the policies are consistent with the values and previous behavior of individuals who must live with those policies. Another way of stating this point is that successful policies are usually considered "wise" by those who must live with them, in that the former are congruent with both the historical goals of the educational program and the values of the program people. Conversely, should the policy stipulate modes of behavior which are not consistent with deeply held values or historical educational goals, the policy has less likelihood of being implemented in that it would force people to behave in a manner which is contradictory to cherished beliefs regarding education.

Rational Justification of Policies: Barnes, Chin, Miles, and others have often stated that policies, to be successfully implemented, must be rationally justified to those responsible for their implementation. This is to say that those most affected by the policies must perceive that it is somehow in their self-interest to abide by them and strive for their implementation. Chin calls this aspect of successful policy implementation the "rational calculus of self-interest," in that people should perceive that the policy will in some respects, help them to foster either individual ends or shared, group-related goals. This aspect of successful policy implementation has the effect of reducing policy statements from abstractions to the arena of personal utility, and implies that individuals are more likely to strive to implement a policy which they perceive will generate some direct and concrete benefit to them.

Clarity of Policy Statement: It is axiomatic both in the literature on educational change and within our own experience that policies which are understood are most likely to be implemented. This suggests that policies should be stated in unambiguous fashion which leaves little or no room for possible misinterpretation of intent. The premise regarding clarity implies that to the extent that individuals are free to interpret policy statements in ways idiosyncratic to them, the likelihood of successful implementation of the policy is severely vitiated. This premise further suggests that any ambiguities in the language of the policy statement should be clarified at the outset, and should be anticipated by those responsible for generating and stating the policies.

Formality of Policy Transmission: Our own experience and the experience of others to who we have spoken regarding this problem indicates that policies are more likely to be implemented if they are set within a written, historical context. Simply stated, this means that there should be a written record of the policy which is communicated to all of those on whom that policy will have an impact. Further, the series of circumstances, events, and actions which culminated in the generation of a given policy should be documented in writing and available to those affected by the policy. This does not denigrate the effectiveness of oral communication, but does imply that policies must exist in writing, and should be communicated via this medium to all of those responsible for the implementation of those policies. This premise is closely related to that mentioned above, in that the existence of a written policy statement decreases the likelihood of misunderstanding and misinterpretation at the operational level.

Non-Contradictory Nature of Policies: This point is closely related to the first policy facilitation strategy which is mentioned above. It means that new policies which are generated should not contradict in substantive fashion policies which have already been implemented. In light of contradictory policies, it is

likelythat confusion will ensue on the part of those responsible for implementing policies in that the latter will not be cognizant of which policy has priority. In that event, it is further likely that the older policy, already operationalized, will continue to be followed.

Policy Follow-Up: Even if policies are clearly stated, communicated in written form, and are not contradictory to previous policies, the chances for slippage between the intent of the policy makers and the operationalization of those policies on a programatic level are great. For even if the aforementioned conditions are met, those responsible for implementing the policy still might not understand its importance, the priority placed upon it by policy makers, or its intent. It is therefore essential that those responsible for generating policies devise strategies which may run the gamut from informal observations, to written reports, to formal or informal interviews. The form which they take is not as important as their existence. Concisely, those responsible for the generation of policy should also be responsible for assuring that their policies get implemented. - Are we talking about a monitoring role

Level of Skill Required for Policy Implementation: One of the inevitable consequences of implementing a new policy is a change in behaviors on the part of those responsible for such implementation. Bell and others have stated that "successful" policies do not require changes in behavior which exceeds the skill or know-how of those most responsible for implementing the policies. That is, policy makers must take great pains to insure that those who are most responsible for implementing their policies possess sufficient skills and/or knowledge to act upon those policies. In the event that such skills are not possessed by policy implementors, those responsible for generating policies should insure that the implementors will be provided with the opportunity to learn the requisite skills.

Breadth of Participation in Policy Generation: Louis Barnes among others, suggests that policies are more likely to be successfully implemented if those who are most affected by them are given the opportunity to participate in their generation. Barnes argues for the widest possible input into policy content from all constituencies who will be affected by the implementation of the policy. Our experience with RENP in particular and other programs in general corroborates this point.

Legitimate Exercise of Authority: Warren G. Bennis, in addressing the notion of effective educational change suggests that the generation of policies which will necessitate changes in program operation and/or behavior of program staff must be generated by those whom others perceive as having the legitimate authority to do so. That is, those who are affected by a given policy must perceive that those generating the policy have the the right and the authroity to generate them. This characteristic of successful policies suggests that personnel at all levels within a given educational system or program must understand the formal and informal lines of authority inherent within that system.

Narrow Range of Variables Upon Which Policies Should Impact: Both Miles and Chin among others suggest that the behavioral and/or operational changes necessitated by any given policy be severely restricted in scope. Their point is that human beings can only accommodate a certain number of changes at any given point in time. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those who make policy to ensure that the number of changes necessitated by that policy is sufficiently small in scope that those affected by the policy can effectively deal with those changes. This facilitative strategy implies that planned change need not occur all at once, but should be characterized by an accretion of smaller steps which in their aggregate will sum to a major change in program operations and/or procedures.

Such a tactic permits those affected by policies to internalize any radical changes in small, discrete steps, and further to become adept at the management of these changes before moving on to encounter another series of changes in procedures or behaviors.

In citing the list described above, we do not mean to suggest that all successful policies are characterized by all of the strategies described. Depending upon the policy under consideration and the socio-political context in which the policy is generated, some of the strategies may be more appropriate at certain times than others. Our intent in this chapter has merely been to suggest certain possible "policy facilitators" which may prove helpful in insuring the successful implementation of policies generated by the Anacostia Community School Board. In the chapters which follow, we will attempt to cite which of these strategies appeared to be operative in the three policies which were analyzed in relation to this study.

The First Policy: "The Local School Boards shall have a direct involvement in their schools' dealings with concerns of importance to their local community."

What Does it Mean?" The Local School Boards within Region I are intended to function as the locus of community control of the schools. That is, they represent the primary vehicle by which community input is solicited, and community concerns are addressed, both in terms of general educational policies, and in terms of policies idosynchratic to the RENP program in any given school. To facilitate responsiveness to community-perceived needs, the Local School Boards' membership is drawn from a spectrum of constituencies including the principal, teachers, parents, community representatives and paraprofessionals working in the school. The number of individuals from any given constituency serving on the local school board varies from school to school; the categories of membership however are uniform across schools.

The composition of the Local School Boards suggests the intent of the policy decision stated above: that these board will be sensitive to and will act upon school-related matters which the community feels are salient. As the major governing body for Region I, it is the responsibility of the ACSB to ensure that the local boards are fulfilling their mandate.

Related sub-issues: In studying this policy, it became apparent that there are three important sub-issues, posed here as questions, which, taken together would facilitate an examination of the responsiveness of the local school boards to community concerns. These issues are as follows:

- o What constitutes an operational Local School Board?
- o What different kinds of concerns and issues do the Local School Boards address, and who brings these concerns to the attention of the Boards?
- o Does the role of the principal, in relation to the Local School Boards, differ from the role of other Board members?

Who Generated the Policy?: While this policy, as others to be examined in this study was endorsed by the Anacostia Community School Board, its genesis lay within the RENP Committee. This committee, constituted of ten members of the larger Anacostia Community School Board, is directly responsible for suggesting RENP policies to the larger board, and for monitoring the progress of the implementation of these policies. Our interviews with three key members of the RENP Committee suggest that the policy was formulated out of a concern that the local school boards were to serve as sounding boards for community concerns. Prior to the generation of this policy, members of the RENP Committee (which includes among its members individuals who are also members of the local school boards), were not certain that the local boards fully understood their obligation to be responsive to community needs.

How Was the Policy Communicated?: Our interviews with members of the RENP Committee and members of various local school boards suggest that the policy was communicated informally at two levels. First, the RENP Committee orally

to the local school boards via the local school board representatives who serve as members of the ACSB. We could find no evidence that the policy had been communicated through written channels.

Data Collection Strategies: Data were collected on the operations of ten Local School Boards. The rationale for limiting data collection to ten Boards, rather than the full complement of twenty such Boards is addressed in the following section, which answer the question; "What constitutes an operational Local School Board?". Both observational and interview data were collected for each Local School Board as follows: at least three and often as many as five meetings of the Boards were attended by at least one staff person from the contractor's office; the average number of meetings observed for a given school was four. Observers in attendance at these meetings kept careful field notes on who attended and participated in each meeting, both Local School Board members and non-members; the issues discussed at each meeting and who raised what kinds of issues; the action taken by the Boards, if any on given issues and finally, the kinds of issues on which the Local School Boards seemed reluctant to act. To supplement the observational data, interviews were conducted, at least once with all principals at whose schools the Local School Boards were being observed. The interviews concentrated on the principals' perceptions of the kinds of issues and concerns brought before the Boards by various members. Further, interviews were conducted, at least twice, with the RENP Community Organizers at whose schools Boards were being observed because the contractor felt that the Community Organizers were sensitive to and cognizant of community needs. Finally, interviews were conducted with at least two Local School Board members at each school (including the Board Chairperson) to determine their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Boards and the latters' sensitivity to community needs.

Both interview and observational data were content analyzed around salient dimensions embedded in the data. That is, categories of response were not established a priori, but "fell out" naturally from the data. Once content categories had been established, frequency tabulations by category were performed and partitioned by school and membership categories. Finally, all tabulations were entered into a 10 by 20 matrix which summarized frequency of response by data category and by school.

What do the Data Indicate?: In large measure, the data collected pursuant to this question suggest that, of the Boards studied, all are generally responsive to and cognizant of community concerns. To fully understand the data which were collected, it is important to examine in some detail, the sub-issues which were cited earlier, and then to return to the larger policy-related question. Each of these sub-issues will be discussed in the order in which they were originally presented.

What Constitutes an Operational Local School Board?: It is axiomatic that to be effective, a Local School Board must first exist; not merely as a paper entity, but as an organization which holds regular, announced meetings, with people in attendance. This axiom, in turn, provided the basis for generating two criteria which, in the judgment of the contractor constitute a standard by which to determine which School Boards were operational, and which were not. The criteria utilized for this study were as follows:

- o Did the Local School Board hold regular, announced, monthly meetings?
- o If regular meetings were held, were representatives from all intended constituencies in attendance at most meetings?

On the basis of the criteria cited above, the contractor determined that, of a possible twenty Local School Boards, ten were fully operational. This does not mean that the remaining ten were entirely moribund; it suggests only that, at the time the data were collected, the former had not become entirely operationalized.

Of the ten schools which had fully operational Local Boards, nine were Phase I schools and the remaining school had been designated by the project as Phase II.

What different kinds of concerns and issues do the Local School Boards address, and who brings these concerns to the attention of the Boards?

This question in actuality, reflects the crux of the answer to the larger policy-related question, in that an understanding of who brings what kinds of concerns before the Local Boards will in large measure determine whether or not the Boards are being effectively utilized by their major constituencies. Both of the major data sources utilized in relation to this question; namely, observations and interviews are congruent in what they suggest.

The kinds of issues with which the Local School Boards dealt primarily may be classified into six, broad categories which are defined and described as follows:

- Issues relating to Buildings and Grounds: This was the most frequently recurring issue addressed by Local Boards. Essentially, such concerns fell into two sub-categories: effecting repairs to building and grounds occurring either through acts of vandalism or deterioration of the physical plant.

- Issues regarding the Safety and Health of the Students: Primarily this concern, which was the second most recurring issue addressed by the Local Boards, focused upon the physical safety of the students in their travels to and from school. Often however, such issues also concerned health hazards which parents, principals and/or others felt that the school posed for its students.

- Issues concerning purchase and/or distribution of Materials and Books: This issue had many facets, running the gamut from who should be responsible for paying for materials lost or stolen, to the quality and condition of materials and books. This issue represents the third most frequently recurring concern addressed by the Local Boards.

- Issue concerning Staffing: This concern, which represents the fourth most recurring issue handled by Local Boards related both to the assignment of specific teachers to given schools and classes, and also to the number of teachers assigned to any particular school.

- Issues pertaining to Educational Quality and School Administration: This issue, which is the fifth most frequently recurring one, focused upon the academic program at a particular school (including RENP as one aspect of the academic program), and upon administrative concerns such as the school budget and the hours during which the school would be open and accessable to parents and students.

- o Issues pertaining to Increasing and Stimulating Parental Involvement: This final concern, which recurred less frequently than all of the above, centered around ways of broadening the schools' base of community support and procedures for effecting meaningful community involvement in the life of the school.

This list cited on the preceeding page represents a distillation of those issues most frequently addressed by the Local School Boards. It now remains to examine each of these issues in some detail to determine who brought the issues before the Boards, why these issues were perceived as important, and what resolution, if any was made by the Boards, in relation to each of the issues. It is most efficacious to examine each of the issues separately, in that different constituencies brought different kinds of issues to the Boards. Examination of each issue then, should provide some insight as to which matters were considered most important by parents, which were most important to pincipals, and which were most important to other membership categories.

Issues pertaining to Buildings and Grounds: This issue represented the point at which the concerns of principals, parents and teachers most frequently coalesced. That is, all of the constituencies involved in the operation of the Local School Boards were vitally concerned with these matters, and supported each other in their attempts to remediate perceived problems. For the most part, concerns relating to this issue centered around much-needed repairs to the school buildings, yet occassionally they focused upon the adequacy of facilities such as providing sufficient and appropriate space for RENP-related activities.

It is difficult to determine with any degree of precision who, as a rule, brings Building and Grounds issues before the Local School Boards. In the case of emergency repairs (such as bursting water pipes, or explosions in science laboratories) issues were almost always initiated by the principal, usually, according to our interview data out of a sense of frustration. That is, in the case of emergency repairs, the principal attempted to secure the necessary remediation

unilaterally, often without success. He or she then brought the problem to the Local School Board for its consideration and resolution.

In the case of buildings and grounds issues of a non-emergency nature however, parents and the principals tend to bring such issues before the Boards with about the same degree of frequency. In most cases of this nature, parents and principals will conjointly raise the issue for Board consideration.

While issues related primarily to facilities improvements and repairs may, on the surface seem mundane matters for a policy-making Board to consider, closer scrutiny reveals that the issues themselves have ramifications which are greater than might at first appear evident. This is true for two reasons; first, issues relating to Buildings and Grounds are both visible and tangible, not abstract or philosophical. This means that when results are forthcoming, and the Board has been successful in effecting the necessary repairs, the results are immediately apparent and gratifying. They represent tangible proof that the Board can do something. Secondly, issues relating to Buildings and Grounds represent a common point on which principals, parents and teachers can agree. As one Board member expressed her point: "You can't disagree that the paint is flaking or the pipe has burst, and you can't disagree that the playground is littered with broken glass." Conversely, it's often easy "to disagree about which program is best, or how this or that subject can best be taught". Thus, these issues can be construed as a starting point which establishes the precedent for an effective partnership between principals on the one hand, and parents on the other. As one principal said: "When parents act together in a group, they can get things done that I just can't, acting on my own as a single individual".

Thus far we have stated that buildings and grounds issues are most frequently brought before the Local Boards and that parents and principals support each other in an attempt to remediate commonly perceived problems. It now remains to

examine how these issues get resolved by the Board.

It should be noted here that, in many cases, issues which necessitate the expenditure of ample funds do not get resolved at the local level, but are referred to the larger, more powerful Anacostia Community School Board. The involvement of the ACSB in local school concerns will be the subject of the next major section of this report. What is important to consider here is that solutions to problems pertaining to buildings and grounds are, without exception, initiated at the level of the Local School Boards, and in many cases are solved at this level. Our interview and observational data indicate a fairly uniform pattern of response to these issues at the local level. The pattern was described, in identical terms by two members of different Local Boards as "trying to bring as much pressure to bear as we can". In most cases this means that parents on the Local School Board will actively solicit support from other parents whose children attend a given school, and will ask them to demonstrate such support by writing letters or making phone calls to "significant individuals", in an attempt, as one Board chairperson said to "touch based with as many of the powers that be as possible". Usually, if such tactics do not bring about the desired results, the matter is referred to the Anacostia Community School Board. Usually, but not always. In one case for example, drain-pipes at a particular school became clogged and resulted in the playground's becoming inundated with water. Parents attempted to resolve the problem through the tactics described above; such attempts were ineffective. Consequently, a group of parents, spearheaded and organized by parents and/or principals resort to extraordinary measures. In most cases however, as suggested above, the Local Board tries to utilize its network of contacts throughout the Region and/or the District, in attempting to resolve Buildings and Grounds issues.

Issues pertaining to Safety and Health: As mentioned previously, most of the concerns which pertain to this issue relate either to students' safety in traveling to and from school or to potential health hazards posed by the school itself. The specifics of health and safety related issues vary from school to school: some pertain to traffic problems within a particular school neighborhood; some to the type, cost and amount of food which children are served for lunch; still others relate to securing the funds necessary to employ a school nurse on a full or part time basis. One such issue which recurred across six different Local Boards concerned the selling of dope to school children by "pushers" located in the proximity of the schools; in particular Board members were concerned about reports that candy and ice cream trucks were also engaged in the business of selling dope to school children.

In the discussion of Buildings and Grounds issues, we indicated that often the Local Board was unable to secure adequate resolution and thus referred the matter to the ACSB. Such is not the case in terms of health and safety related concerns, which are always, in the instances which we observed, defined and solved at the level of the Local School Board. The reason for this is that, for the most part, health and safety matters are particularistic issues, and the means for their solution is largely external to the purview of the Region or the District. By and large these issues are successfully resolved by the Local Board, often by utilizing the "parent network" tactics described above. Essentially such a tactic entails locating parents of children in the school who may have important contacts which may be of use in solving a particular problem, and urging such parents to utilize these contacts. As a rule, such tactics are employed with the knowledge and consent of the principals. Yet the various safety and health issues are often different enough to warrant situation-specific kinds of strategies. The following examples, each drawn from a different school, highlight the kinds of creative solutions utilized in an attempt by the Local Boards to remediate

health and safety problems:

- EXAMPLE: At a given school the position of School Nurse was effectively removed from the personnel allocation. Both the principal and parents felt that the lack of a School Nurse provided a potential health hazard for the students. They tried to have the position reallocated through the usual "network" tactics and were not successful. In fact, they were told, that the program which had been paying the salary for that position had been cut and would not be reinstituted. After exhausting their network capabilities, parents and the principal decided to seek a coalition-partnership with other parent groups in the school, and raised sufficient funds to hire a nurse on their own.

- EXAMPLE: At one school both parents and the principal were concerned about possible safety hazards resulting from a heavy flow of traffic on the streets abutting the school. To voice such concern they formed a committee which attempted to persuade the D. C. Department of Public Safety that a traffic light should be installed on one of the corners on which the school is located. Their initial attempts were rebuffed because the agency responsible for the installation of such lights contended that the committee had not demonstrated that they represented the wishes of the entire community. ~~To further strengthen their case, the committee had not demonstrated that they represented the wishes of the entire community.~~ To further strengthen their case, the committee then designed and implemented a community-wide survey which elicited sufficient data to demonstrate that the installation of such a light was a matter of concern to the community. In this they were successful.

The generalization that may be drawn about issues related to safety and health then is that parents and principals do tend to work together to seek resolution of problems; that the problems are usually resolved at the local level and that, while the use of the "network" strategy may be the tactic of first choice, the Local Boards often respond in unique ways to the problems of the moment.

Issues Concerning Purchase and/or Distribution of Materials and Books:

This is an extremely broad category which encompasses a wide range of issues, from purchase of school supplies for library or classroom use, to problems with the allocation of materials. While there are many issues considered by the Local Boards in relation to this category, most occur on a one-time-only basis and are

idiosynchratic to particular schools. There are some issues in this category however which recur within and across schools. Essentially, the recurring issues may be summarized as follows: parents having to pay for books which their children lose, coupled with the fact that if the books are later found parents are not reimbursed; misallocation of textbooks (i.e. materials sent to the wrong school); and finally the issue of teachers utilizing their own funds to buy books which are used to augment "inadequate" library stocks.

Those members who bring issues like the above to the attention of the Local Boards tend to vary according to the issues being raised. In the case of parents having to pay for lost books for example, parents as some might suspect, brought the matter to the attention of the Local Boards. In these issues however, they tended to be firmly supported by principals. In cases concerning the incorrect routing of textbooks or other materials, principals are most likely to bring the matter to the Boards' attention. In the cases observed which concerned teachers purchasing books with their own funds to supplement what they felt were inadequate library materials, teachers raised the issue, but were firmly supported, in all cases by parents and other members of the Local School Boards. Thus, in relation to the issues cited above the membership categories initiating Board action are roughly even divided among principals, parents and teachers, each of whom receives the support of the other constituencies of the Boards.

As was the case with safety and health issues, these concerns tend to be addressed and resolved at the Local School Board level, without recourse to the ACSB. One of the reasons for the success of Local Boards in dealing with these issues is that the latter have gained some expertise in ~~to~~ dealing with this general area. As to the tactics employed for successful resolution of the problems, these tend again, to be situation-specific but almost always entail parents and principals coming together to formulate a strategy. The following examples are illustrative of this point:

- o EXAMPLE: At one school teachers and parents were extremely concerned that the former were spending their own money to broaden the selections available to students in the school's library. Utilizing normal network channels, a Board committee determined that there were no Regional funds available to purchase additional library supplies. Thus, parents planned and held their own fund raising activity to secure the necessary funds.

- o EXAMPLE: In one school an entire order of textbooks were misrouted to another school in the District. Both parents and the principal were concerned in that these books were critical to a given program in the school. Parents on the Local School Board informed the principal that they would hold her/him strictly accountable for the expeditious return of the books and would closely monitor his/her activities in securing their return. As the principal indicated "I took responsibility for getting the books, but those parents kept on my back until I did it."

- o EXAMPLE: In two schools parents were very concerned that they had to make restitution for books allocated to their children, which the school claimed were never returned. Often, parents felt, the books were subsequently located, yet parents were not reimbursed. While this issue has not been totally resolved, parents, teachers and principals are working together to develop a better procedure for keeping track of textbooks within these schools.

The major generalization that can be drawn from the preceeding discussion is that, in relation to issues concerning materials and textbooks, Local School Boards are usually successful in generating strategies to cope with the problems which occur. Further, this success seems to result from a close and cooperative alliance of parents, teachers and the principals on the Local Boards.

Issues Concerning Staffing: The concerns addressed by Local School Boards in relation to staffing largely focused upon the reactions of individual Boards to the "equalization" concept mandated by the District of Columbia Public School System. Essentially the qualization mandate stipulated that teachers would be allocated to schools on the basis of the population of a given school. In several cases, Local School Boards became involved in this issue when the policy resulted in the forced transfer of teachers from one school to another. In still other instances, Local Boards became involved because the District of Columbia Public School System decreed that administrative positions were to be "frozen" (i.e. no new hiring would take place) which, in light of new schools being constructed,

meant that certain schools would have a given portion of their administrators transferred to the new schools. One case in particular entailed the transfer of a principal popular with the Local School Board. Thus, the entire issue of staffing represents an attempt on the part of the local community entity (the LOcal School Board), to maintain effective control over its school in the light of District-wide policies.

Most of the cases brought before the Local Boards concerned the transfer of teachers from the particular school under the control of a given Board to another location. In all of these cases, the principal brought the matter to the attention of the Local Board for its consideration. Interestingly however, in cases which involved the transfer of administrators community residents (parents) brought the matter up for Board action.

In many cases, the Local Boards were able to resolve the issues concerning teacher transfers at the local level by utilizing the parental network described earlier. Interview data indicate that, though the network was operated by concerned parents, precipitated into action by parents on the Board, the strategy was jointly derived by the principal and the parents. The strategy which was developed as a response to this concern was simple and effective: the principal at a given school would write a letter to appropriate officials of DCPS, concerned parents would then support the principal's contentions by writing letters of their own and make phone calls to the same officials protesting the transfer of the teachers. In most cases, the Local Boards were successful in having the teachers reinstated.

In cases concerning the transfer of administrators, the Local Boards attempted no resolution at the school level. Instead, they immediately brought such issues to the ACSB for its action. In so doing, the Local Boards demonstrated, in our view a sophisticated appreciation of reality, in that they realized that admin-

istrative transfers should be resolved at the Regional level, in that such transfers actually involved the whole of Region I.

The case of staffing issues, particularly as these related to teacher transfers substantiates some of the generalizations made earlier; that parents and principals were able to forge a viable and effective working relationship which produced desired results.

Issues Pertaining to Academic Quality and School Administration: The preceeding discussions have emphasized that, in relation to certain issues, the principals and parents supported each other as members of the Local Boards, as each membership category perceived common areas of concern. In the area of academic quality and school administration, which is at least one level removed in abstraction from the other, more tangible issues mentioned previously, our data indicated that the alliance becomes somewhat vitiated because principals' perceptions are not necessarily congruent with those of parents in what constitutes "good" education, either programatically or administratively. Our interviews with parents and principals also suggest that the latter are reluctant to permit the "intrusion" of parents into their professional domain. Basically the issues addressed by the Local Boards in this area centered either around the assessment of the educational quality of given programs, or around such administrative concerns as budgets for individual schools. Two of the Board chairpersons interviewed expressed the belief that, in the future, Local Boards would become more involved in issues such as these, particularly as the Boards gain expertise in learning to more quickly gain satisfaction in concrete areas having to do with Buildings and Grounds and the like.

Given the point made above regarding principals' reluctance to include parents in "abstract" academic areas, it is not surprising that Board action on issues

relating to these areas was usually initiated by parents. We did however observe one instance in which the principal brought such a matter before the Board. In the latter case the principal wished to enlist parental support in improving school discipline. In one other instance the principal and parents joined forces to determine a viable means of assessing student progress in reading and mathematics.

With a single exception, all of the issues brought before the Local Boards that fall within this category were resolved at the local level. This could be construe as an indication that, despite differences in interests between parents and principals, both groups wish to work out solutions to their problems at the school level. The exception to the above occurred in the case of a principal who decided to change the hours that the school would be open. Such a change would have necessitated a later dismissal from school for the students; a change which the parents refused to accept. In this case the Local Board saw the issue as residing in the ACSB's purview and they immediately brought the issue to that body's attention.

The strategies employed by the Local Boards in dealing with these issues vary among both schools and issues. For the most part, when an action is initiated by parents, they are asking for a greater voice in the academic/administrative decision-making that occurs at a particular school. In those cases in which a principal initiates a request for Board action, she/he is usually looking for support from the community. Some of the interview data suggest that each of the two sides (principals and parents) are gradually working towards a mutual accommodation or compromise position. The fact that, in most cases, parents have not felt compelled to bring their concerns before the ACSB (to "go over" the head of the principal), substantiates these data. It is entirely possible that,

as the Local Boards gain more experience and trust in working together, roles will become more sharply defined and the two groups will come to support each other in this area as they have in others.

Issues Pertaining to Increasing and Stimulating Parental Involvement: Interviews with principals and Local Board members indicate that, as a rule, only a small core of parents are willing to volunteer their time and efforts to become active in school-related issues. Therefore, most of the Local Boards are vitally concerned with increasing parent participation in the schools. Parental members of the Boards feel that an increase in parental involvement will increase the sensitivity of the school in making the latter aware of community needs and desires and will further augment the power and influence of those Board members who are parents. They also feel that an increased awareness of parents, regarding school activities, will help to raise the quality of the education being offered in the schools. For the most part, issues raised in relation to this concern centered around informing parents of school programs, soliciting time from parents to act as playground chaperones and classroom visitors, and urging more parents to participate in fund raising activities designed to directly impinge upon the quality of educational program (i.e. generating money to buy needed materials).

In almost every case, such concerns were brought to the Board's attention by the parents. Principals' support for increased parental participation was generally positive, though tinged with caution. Presumably in terms of these issues, as with the preceeding, principals were slightly leery of something which might impinge upon their areas of expertise. Here again however, in most instances, principals and parents did actively work together to generate strategies for increasing the involvement of parents in the school. The tactics developed for increasing parental participation were, at the time of our data collection, still in the formative stages, therefore, it is not possible to assess their

effectiveness. Yet several sound promising. Two in particular seem extremely innovative and are offered below as examples of the types of strategies parents and principals are evolving to meet what they perceive as a problem.

- o EXAMPLE: At one school, the principals and parents developed what they called the "40/80 plan". The terms of this plan were that parents on the Board would attempt to get a minimum of eighty additional parents to commit themselves to eighty hours of school-related work during the year; forty of these hours would be spent in providing direct services to the school and the remaining forty hours would be devoted at attending meetings, participating in forums, travel to conferences and the like. The group of volunteers would be known as the "40/80 Club.

- o EXAMPLE: At one school parents and the principal organized a "Spring Seminar" at which parents and teachers got together to discuss school-related problems, and to explore future avenues of cooperation.

While the above stand out as the most novel of the approaches attempted by the various Local Boards, virtually all of the latter expend a great amount of time in preparing and sending leaflets describing forthcoming school activities, and physcially canvassing the community to enlist parental support.

Virtually all of the issues addressed by the Local Boards within this category are resolved at the school level. This is entirely logical in that principals and other Board Members tended to define these issues as specifically related to their schools.

The examples cited above lend further credence to generalizations made earlier; that parents and principals, through the vehicle of the Local Boards are developing a successful working relationship.

This section has attempted to examine and describe the kinds of issues with which Local Boards predominantly deal; it has further depicted those categories of members who most frequently bring different kinds of issues before the Boards for appropriate action. The section has not dwelled extensively upon the role of the

teachers as members of the Local Boards, nor has it discussed at all the participation of students or paraprofessionals. Yet at virtually all of the meetings which were observed, both paraprofessionals, teachers and students were in attendance, Our observations however, corroborated by interview data, indicate that the participation of these three groups is minimal. For the most part, Local Board meetings are taken up by discussions between principals and parents. In matters requiring input from teachers and/or paraprofessionals, the latter are likely to echo the sentiments and opinions of the principal. While the lack of such participation may deprive the Boards of valuable insights and potential resources, it should not be surprising.

Does the Role of the Principal, in Relation to the Local School Boards, Differ from the role of other Board Members?

In the previous discussion we have indicated that principals tend to raise certain kinds of issues, parents some different kinds of issues and parents and principals together still other types of concerns. This in itself suggests some role differentiation between parents and principals. We have also demonstrated that teachers and paraprofessionals, while members of the Local School Boards, tend by and large, to reflect the proclivities of the principals. It is evident therefore, that the two major role categories which should be differentiated are those of the principals on the one hand, and the parents on the other. All of our data, both interview and observational suggest that the character of a given Local Board is largely defined by and through the activities and predelections of the principals, Consequently we will turn first to an examination of the principals' role in relation to the Local School Boards.

The Role of the Principal:

Our data indicate that, for the ten Local Boards studied, principals fall basically into two distinct groups, both of which are defined by the attitudes of the

principals towards the Local Boards. These groups may be summarily defined as antagonistic and supportive.

The "antagonistic" perception of Local Boards militates against the viability of this approach to local control, and may be characterized as cases in which the principal perceives the Board as a threat to his/her authority and professionalism.

The following quote, excerpted from an interview with one of the principals in this group is illustrative of the attitudes which serve to define these perceptions:

> "They (parents on the Local Board) are just trying to improve their own positions and financial situations by serving on the Local School Board... I don't really trust their motives..."

Other principals, also within this group, have used such terms as "opportunists" and "power mongers" to describe parents on the Local School Boards. Principals within this group also tend to perceive parental involvement on the Local Boards as only a single group, among other parent groups (such as PTA's) which are active in the school, and feel that parents on the Local Boards are, in fact, less representative of the total parent community than members of other groups. Therefore, as a rule, these principals are often reluctant to use the Local School Boards, since, in many cases, they wish to curtail, rather than augment, the latter's power. In several instances then, these principals appear at odds with their Local Boards, and some even view the Boards' attempts to exercize power as exercises in "harassment". As one local board member (a parent) defined the issue:

> "She (the principal) doesn't trust us...except in certain situations we're always having to buck her or think of ways to get around her..."

It should be noted that, as previous discussions have indicated, the relationship between "antagonistic" principals and parents may be subtly changing for the better, particularly as the two groups are able to see tangible proof that their working together often results in positive outcomes (as in Building and

Grounds issues). To a large extent, the fostering of a cooperative relationship between principals and teachers has been fostered by several of the Community Organizers employed by the Response to Educational Needs Project. Principals and parents alike tend to state that they trust the Community Organizers. The latter, in their interviews revealed that they have actively tried to foster a close, harmonious relationship between the two parties. Such a shift in attitude is reflected in the following composite quotation, drawn from interviews with three of the principals in the "antagonistic" camp:

> I don't know..maybe I've been too hard on them (the parents)...they can definitely get things done to this place that I can't...It's difficult, but maybe we're learning to trust each other more but...it's still going to take some time..."

The "supportive" principals tend to view the Local School Boards as vehicles for getting things done which the principals cannot accomplish on their own. Their view is a utilitarian one which indicats their realization that parents on the Local Boards can often bring great amounts of pressure to bear in certain cases which the principals, acting unilaterally, could not exert. This perception holds true particularly in relation to building and grounds issues where, again, both principals and parents can often see immediate, concrete results of their actions. It is also true that principals within this group, contrary to the group cited above, tend to view the parents on the Local Boards as the most viable parental group of all those in the school. These principals tend, not only to regularly attend Local Board meetings, but also to more fully share information and concerns with the Boards than is the case with their counterparts cited above. The attitudes of the principals in this group have a direct bearing on the ambiance of the Board meetings, and also upon the way in which they are perceived by parental members of the Board. The following composite quotation, distilled from interviews with four parent-members of four different Local Boards is illustrative of this point:

> "We really have started to have a good thing here...usually we can see the principapl's point of view and she/he seems to understand ours... The principal is starting to tell us alot about the educational program now...and is asking our opinions...this wasn't true before...we support him/her and she/he supports us...we realize now that we want the same things... we are all in this together..."

As the above citation suggests, Local Boards which include "supportive" principals are usually characterized by a symbiotic relationship between principals and parents in which each is generall supportive of the actions of the other. As one principal in this group aptly phrased it:

> "We have begun to work well together...I trust them and can count on their support most of the time...I think they have started to trust me...and most of the time I support them (the parents)"

As was the case in the previous instance, parents and principals alike attribute a large measure of their successful partnership to the overt actions of the Community Organizers who, from the beginning of the year have been actively fosterting and nurturing such a relationship. While the methods used by the Community Organizers to facilitate the working partnerships vary from school to school, all of the Organizers interviewed stated that they began the process, in the beginning of the year, by talking, separately, to parents and principals about issues in which each could use the other to foster a common end. Illustrative of this point is the following composite quotation excerpted from interviews with three Community Organizers:

> "Parents and principals have the same agendas alot of the time..it's merely a matter of getting each group to realize that many of their concerns are common...You do it by starting out as a pipeline between the two...you hope that after a while they'll get together on their own and won't need to use you as often...I think that it's starting to happen..."

We have stated that to a large extent, the attitudes of the principals characterizes the ambiance of the Local School Boards. It now remains to examine the role that parents play on these Boards.

The Role of the Parents:

As might be expected, the role played by parents is directly related to the particular category of principal with which they are working. Succinctly, in cases where parents are working with a "supportive" principal, the former tend to become actively involved with substantive issues much more quickly than do parents working with an "antagonistic" one. Further, in most Board meetings which we observed, the types of issues with which parents became actively involved was in part related to the agressiveness of the Board Chairperson in pushing the cause of parental involvement. As one Board Chairperson stated the case:

> "Whether or not issues which parents think are important get attention from the Local Board has alot to do with the level of awareness and the agressiveness of the Local Board chairman...If he (the chairman) is agressive, and can get the support of the other parents on the Board...the Board will act on those issues..."

Our interviews with Board Chairpersons, as well as our observations suggest that, as the chairpeople become more sure of themselves in their roles, they are becoming more agressive over time. This feeling of self-assurance is greatly enhanced in those cases where the Board has been able to accomplish something relatively quickly (as in the case of Building and Grounds and safety and health issues). The following composite quotation, distilled from interviews with five Board Chairpersons reflects this sentiment:

> "At first I didn't know what I could do...I thought it would be just another group of parents like the PTA...when we got that pipe fixed I started to think that maybe we did have some influence we could use...I think I am starting to understand what parents can accomplish if they are together... I think I have the right to let the Board know about the wishes of the parents and community...We have a right to a voice in decisions..."

The Primary Policy Reconsidered:

We began this section by explaining a policy of the Anacostia Community School Board which stated that the Local School Boards should have a direct involvement in their schools' dealings with matters that are important to the local community. The data presented herein indicates that, of the ten Local School Boards encompassed by this study, the policy has in general been implemented. While this is certainly variable across issues and Boards, our data indicate that parents, as community representatives are assuming and every increasing role in the operation of their Local Boards. The data also suggest that, as time goes on, and principals and parents come to see each other as allies, parents should tend to become more involved with substantive educational issues which affect their schools. Essentially then, the discussions presented in this section of the report warrant the following conclusions:

- o by and large, Local School Boards are responsive to community concerns as defined by parents
- o the kinds of issues most readily raised by parents and acted upon by the Local Boards are those from which immediate results can be expected
- o parents are becoming increasingly more involved in substantive educational issues pertaining to the quality of programs offered at their schools
- o to a large extent the atmosphere of the Local Boards is determined by the "antagonistic" or "supportive" attitude of the principals
- o there is some evidence to suggest that parents and principals are creating a workable, effective partnership through the use of the Local School Boards
- o the Community Organizers, employed by the Response to Educational Needs Project have greatly facilitated the principals-parents partnership
- o the effectiveness of a given Local Board is in part determined by the agressiveness and self-assurance of the Board Chairperson
- o there is some evidence to suggest that Board Chairpersons are becoming more self-assured in their roles

The reader will note that, for the most part, the activities of the Local School Boards do not directly pertain to the Response to Educational Needs Project. Given the kinds of issues with which the Boards have been primarily concerned during the course of the past year, this is not surprising. However, it has been indicated that, as the relationships between principals and parents become more finely defined and viable, parents and others should begin addressing more"abstract" matters of educational concern. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that, in future months, as academic issues become more frequently addressed in the context of Local Board meetings, issues pertaining to RENP will become recurring topics of discussion. It should further be noted that one of the reasons for the success of the Local Boards in implementing and being responsive to the policy dictated by the ACSB is directly related to RENP, in that the Community Organizers are in large measure responsible for such success.

Recommendations:

We believe that to a large extent, problems encountered by the Local Boards which arise out of conflict between principals and parents will, over time dwindle as a function of the evolutionary relationship. To augment the likelihood of such an occurance however, we make the following recommendations:

- that Community Organizers report on a regularly scheduled basis, both to RENP and the Chairperson and Principals of the Local Boards, on progress which they have noted in the relationships between principals and parents
- that the administrators of RENP officially communicate to all Local School Boards a document which urges those Boards to use Community Organizers as resources
- that there be regularly scheduled meetings between principals and Board Chairpersons from every Local Board such that the Boards can become aware of shared problems and cognizant of solutions which other Boards have attempted

Facilitative Strategies Present in the Implementation of this Policy: In the first chapter we described ten strategies which had, in the past proved successful in assuring implementation of policies. We found, in examining this policy, that the following strategies were operative: 1) Policy Value Orientation This policy was congruent with the historical goals of the program in that since th inception of RENP, one of the purposes of the local school boards was to be responsive to community concerns. In most case this policy was also congruent with the values of those affected by the policy. The single exception to such congruence is that group of principals which often view the local school board as a threat to their authority. 2) Self-Interest - This strategy also was present in most instances in that most of those affected by this policy (i.e. parents, and some principals) perceived that it was in their self-interest to successfully implement the policy. The most glaring exception to this statement, as above, is that group of principals who are some times hostile to the local school boards. 3) Clarity - Though the policy does not exist as a formally written document, it is clear to most of those affected by it. 4) Non-Contradiction - In so far as we could determine having perused the minutes of the RENP Committee and the formal minutes of the ACSB, this policy did not contradict others which had already been implemented. 5) Level of Skill of Policy Implementors - The policy did not exceed for the most part, the skill level of those most responsible for implementing it. That is, community organizers and principals did possess the requisite skills to implement this policy. While it is true that many board chairpeople did not, at the outset of the generation of this policy possess sufficient skill to smoothly implem

it, there is some evidence to suggest that this deficit is being overcome. 6) Breadth of Participation - As mentioned earlier in this section, this policy originated within the RENP Committee, and was then discussed in the larger context of the full Anacostia Community School Board. This suggests that virtually all of the local school boards through their representatives to the larger board, did have an opportunity to participate in the formulation and/or discussion and adoption of this policy. 7) Legitimacy of Authority - It is clear both from the RENP proposal and from interviews with ACSB members and members of various local school boards that the Anacostia Community School Board is the locus of authority for making policy decisions affecting RENP. We did not find either in our interviews or our observations, anyone at any level of the program who questioned the right of RENP to generate this policy. 8) Narrow Range of Changes - This policy served to affirm one of the duties of the local school boards. It focused soley upon the latter dealing with and remaining responsive to community concerns. It did not require a comprehensive change in the operation of the local boards, and was sufficiently narrow in scope to be understood and acted upon.

The Second Policy: "The Anacostia Community School Board shall have a direct involvement in the schools of Region I, dealing with concerns brought to them by the Local School Boards as being untreatable at the local level."

What Does it Mean?: It has been stated previously that the Anacostia Community School Board (ACSB) serves as the major policy-making body for schools within the Region I area. Yet its duties are not circumscribed by the tenets of policy-generation. If, in theory, the Local School Boards represent the vehicles by which community control is exercised by local schools, then the ACSB can be viewed as an analagous body, serving in a Regional capacity. That is, the ACSB is the vehicle by which residents of Anacostia exercise control over all of the schools within Region I. In this sense, the ACSB can be perceived as serving an ombudsmanlike function for the Local School Boards. The intent of the policy cited above reinforces that notion, for in executing this policy the ACSB wished to firmly state its commitment toward aiding Local School Boards in resolving certain issues which the latter either had not been able or felt that they would be unable to resolve at a local level.

The composition of the ACSB in part reinforces the contention made above in that a large portion of the board is constituted of representatives from the Local School Boards. It is these representatives who are supposed to bring matters of local concern to the attention of the larger board. Such a composition further gives the Local Boards direct access, on a regualr basis to the Superintendent of Region I, who serves as amember ex-officio of the board. Thus, given its constitution and its mandate, the ACSB should be able to respond directly to Local Boards' concerns due to its regional, rather than local sphere of influence.

Related sub-issues: In examining the ramifications of this policy, three major sub-issues were also studied as, in their aggregate, they suggest whether or not the policy is actually being implemented. These sub-issues are posed below as questions:

- o What are the channels, both formal and informal, which are utilized to bring matters of local concern before the ACSB?
- o What characterizes the types of issues and concerns that are brought before the ACSB for action?
- o What actions does the ACSB take in attempting to resolve problems brought before it, and how successful are these actions?

Who Generated the Policy?: As was the case with the policy discussed earlier, this policy was initially generated by the RENP Committee which then verbally presented it to the ACSB for approval. Our interviews with ACSB members indicate that the policy was approved though there is no written evidence to substantiate this claim. That is, the policy does not appear in any-of the formal ACSB minutes which we reviewed.

How Was the Policy Communicated?: Individuals who were not members of the RENP Committee were informed verbally about this policy in two ways. First, members of the ACSB were informed by members of the RENP Committee during one of the regularly scheduled meetings of the board. Local boards were informed of the policy, again orally, via their representatives to the ACSB. We were unable to determine whether, in fact, this policy was actually communicated to all local boards, as there is no written evidence to substantiate that this occurred. However, since most Local School Boards did tend to bring certain matters before the larger ACSB we infer that, at least in most cases, such communication did take place.

Data Collection Strategies: As was the case in the previous section, data collection in relation to this policy consisted largely of observations and repeated interviews. Three meetings of the ACSB were attended by at least one of the contractor's personnel. Each observer kept detailed field notes regarding the types of issues brought before the ACSB, the actions, if any, which were taken as a response to these issues and a record of who initiated the discussions. In addition, lengthy discussions, in the form of open-ended interviews were conducted a minimum of three times with

each of four different ACSB members. Finally, five other ACSB members were interviewed at least once, as time and circumstance permitted.

Data were analyzed through the use of a content analysis technique which permitted categories of response to be defined naturally from the interviews and field notes. Subsequent to the establishment of content categories frequency tabulations were performed to determine how often certain issues recurred as foci for ACSB discussions and to ascertain whether or not there existed any consistent pattern regarding the kinds of issues raised by Local Board members.

What do the Data Indicate?: For the most part, the data in relation to this policy are mixed, indicating that the ACSB is sensitive to and acts upon certain kinds of community concerns and that it has done so consistently. Conversely, there is evidence to suggest that the ACSB has only just begun to become sensitive to and to act upon other kinds of concerns with which they have not dealt in the past. To present a comprehensive picture of the data it is essential to examine each of the sub-issues presented earlier, related to this policy. Each of these sub-issues will be discussed in the order in which they were originally presented.

What are the channels, both formal and informal, which are utilized to bring matters of local concern before the ACSB?:

The formal channels by which local matters should come to ACSB attention are clear and well-defined. Each Local School Board must elect a representative to serve on the ACSB. This representative in turn, is charged with bringing matters considered insoluable at the local level, to the attention of the larger board. Concomittantly, the Local Board representatives are charged with circulating information about ACSB's decisions and activities to their Local School Boards. The proper arena for the airing of these concerns is the regularly scheduled public meeting of the ACSB.

Our observations and interview data indicate that the formal mechanism, while it is in place works effectively about sixty percent of the time. That is, in sixty percent of the instances that a local concern should be brought before the ACSB, the concerns are actually aired. In the remaining forty percent of the cases, such concerns do not reach the board through the channels set up as a formal conduit for such information. The reasons for this are twofold, and are discussed below.

One of the major reasons that issues intended for ACSB resolution never reach the proper forum is that some Local Board representatives do not always "represent" the viewpoints and wishes of their constituencies. Several of the ACSB members, interviewed privately, indicated that, in certain cases, the Local Board representative to the ACSB will stress priorities and/or issues which she or he considers important as opposed to the issues which that representative was instructed to bring before the ACSB by his or her Local Board. Further, in many instances, the local representative will not raise an issue to the ACSB which her or his Local Board had demanded be raised. This situation is exemplified in the following quotation excerpted, as a composite from the interviews with two ACSB members:

> "You have to understand that they (representatives from Local Boards) are sometimes trying to increase their own power base and..they don't always deal with issues at ACSB meetings..like their Local Board instructed them to..Usually this is because they have other things they want to talk about or..they don't agree with what the Local Board told them to do..."

The second major reason for a partial breakdown in the formal communications channels relates to the personality of the individual representatives from the Local Boards. Concisely, those who are most agressive and vocal tend to be heard; those who are less self-assured or simply not vocal tend not to have their concerns addressed as readily by the ACSB. One of the ACSB members interviewed indicated that, at the Local Board level, the Board Chairperson is usually the most vocal and agressive member. Yet the Chairperson is not necessarily the representative of the Local

Board who sits on the ACSB. Thus, if a representative is not sufficiently vocal her or his concerns may never get sufficient attention. As a rule, the Chairpersons of the Local Boards are sensitive to this point, and, in an effort to combat what they perceive as a lack of agression on the part of their ACSB representative will often attend meetings themselves, thereby undermining the authority and self-assurance of their own representatives. To further compound the issue, in most cases, the Local Board representative is not aware that his or her Chairperson will be attending any given meeting. As one such representative stated the problem:

> "I didn't even know that she (the Local Chairperson) would be there till I got there...She talked before I even got a chance..."

It should be noted that, as a group, the ACSB is generally aware of the problem cited above, and has formally urged the Local Boards to utilize their representatives at ACSB meetings rather than present a disorganized and often disjointed front.

In addition to the formal communications channels described above, our observations and interviews indicate that there exists a viable, though informal communications network which is sometimes more effective in bringing matters before the ACSB than is the formal one. Actually, the informal communications network is merely a variation of the parental network which was mentioned in the last section. Often the ACSB is made aware of problems at specific schools because of the patterns of communications which exist in the community between local parents and ACSB members, or as is sometimes the case, between principals and ACSB members. While the informal network is often effective it also serves at times to undercut the authority of both the local representatives and the Local School Boards in that, rather than bring a matter up before a Local Board, some parents, whose friends or acquaintances serve as ACSB members, will circumvent the Local Board and raise issues directly with the people whom they know. Further, the people with whom parents will often discuss

issues sometimes will not even bring the matter up for ACSB attention, but will attempt to deal with the matter on their own, thus lessening the likelihood that the ACSB will ever become aware of a given problem.

oEXAMPLE: At one school there were two Buildings and Grounds issues which the Local Board could not satisfactorily resolve. These issues then should have been formally presented to ACSB for consideration and action. However, one of the parents on the Local Board was friendly with a key board member of ACSB and took the problem to him/her immediately. The latter, in turn, rather than bring the issue before the board contacted people whom she/he knew in the District School System and the matter was resolved.

The point of the above example is not that effective resolution of an issue did not occur; clearly it did. Rather, the point is that the channels designed to accommodate the resolution of such issues were not utilized such that, in this case, the effectiveness of the structure could not be tested.

In the previous section we identified two categories of principals; we called them "antagonistic" and "supportive". Principals in the former category often utilize their own informal communications networks to circumvent having to present issues to the Local Boards. Usually, as is the case with parents, principals will contact members of the ACSB whom they know on a personal basis, and will ask that person to use her or his influence to resolve a specific issue.

This tendency is illustrated in the following composite quotation, distilled from informal interviews with three ACSB members:

"They (principals) know they can call me when they want some action... Sometimes principals don't want to get Local Boards involved...so some of the ones I know call me to see if I can do something..."

The informal network is particularly effective concerning issues related to Buildings and Grounds, though it is utilized for other kinds of issues as well. With the exception of Buildings and Grounds-related concerns the informal structures are most often used when parents and/or principals are convinced that immediate action

is needed on a given matter, and that action cannot be taken quickly enough on the local level. In most cases such as the latter, the informal systems are used to get the attention of the Regional Superintendent. Because, as one parent stated:

> "Sometimes there isn't time to deal with stuff at the Local Board...and then have to wait and bring it up to the Area Board...why waste time when I can call a friend and have her get in touch with the Superintendent anyway... He (the Superintendent) can act alot quicker...:

The informal communications networks then represent pragmatic methods of dealing with matters of immediate concern. In utilizing such structures however, the formal mechanisms are often ignored and thus aren't given a chance to demonstrate their efficacy. It should be noted here that our interviews with certain ACSB members indicate that the latter are cognizant of the problem and feel that the board is doing everything in its power to maximize use of the formal structure.

What Characterizes the types of issues and concerns that are brought before the ACSB for action?:

As stated with the ACSB policy, those issues brought before the board (at least through formal channels) are those which the Local School Boards feel are not soluable at a local level. Basically, such issues fall into three categories: Building and Grounds, Staffing, and Academic/Administrative. As indicated in the previous section, issues within these categories are also addressed at the local level, though those which receive ACSB attention have not been resolved at that level. The kinds of issues within the three categories that are normally brought before the board for its attention are described below.

Buildings and Grounds:

Usually those Buildings and Grounds issues which are brought before the ACSB are those which involve more costly expenditures than those resolved at the local level.

The reason for such issues being brought to the attention of the ACSB is that Local Board members correctly perceive that the locus of authority for resolving issues involving large amounts of money resides well outside the local level; often several layers up in the DCPS hierarchy. Thus, the wider sphere of influence which the Community Board is able to exert is often needed to effect successful resolution of such issues. Illustrative of the kinds of Buildings and Grounds issues which get brought before the ACSB are the cases below:

- o EXAMPLE: Local Board members at a given school strongly felt that the school needed painting. Efforts to resolve the issue locally were not successful. The problem was brought before the ACSB by the local representative and the Community was able to have the necessary work performed.

- o EXAMPLE: At one school the football field was in urgent need of major repairs. Members of the Local School Board, having exhausted all of the avenues available to them at the school level took the problem, through their local representative to the ACSB. Though resolution of the problem took several weeks, the Community Board was successful in having the work done.

As was the case concerning Buildings and Grounds, issues which were addressed at the local level, such concerns might, at first blush seem rather trivial matters to be brought before the largest policy making educational body in the Region, particularly given the fact that such concerns represent an overwhelming preponderance of the issues brought before the board by the Local School Boards. Yet the issues are not trivial to those who are concerned about them. In fact, such issues, while they may seem mundane, may also be construed assymbolic of the fact that the ACSB is attentive to, and can effectively help resolve matters of local concern. One of the Board members, when interviewed, stated:

> "It's true that most of the local issues we've dealt with in the past year have concerned Buildings and Grounds. This may not seem like much, but you have to understand that these issues are the <u>immediate concerns</u> (italics added) of the local people...They also provide a way for us to prove to Local Board members that we can do something about their problems..."

Several of the members of the ACSB echoed the sentiments expressed above and added that the Community Board would hopefully start to become involved in more "heady" issues once these immediate concerns had been satisfied. In fact, one of the members stated that "I think, in the future, you'll find that Buildings and Grounds issues will begin to share the spotlight with academic and program-related issues."

Issues Related to Staffing:

In the previous section we explained that staffing issues usually ensued from the "equalization" concept mandate by the District School System, or from the fact that administrative positions had been "frozen" by the District, and hence administrators were being transferred to newly constructed schools. For the most part, issues involving the transfer of teachers are successfully resolved at the level of the Local School Boards and do not come to the attention of the ACSB. Issues involving the transfer of administrators however, are almost always brought to the ACSB for action since these issues are perceived by Local Board members to entail Regional concerns. The following illustration embodies the kinds of staffing issues usually brought to ACSB for resolution.

- o EXAMPLE: Parents at one school were concerned that a principal whom they liked was going to be transferred as a result of the administrative "freeze." The issue was brought before the ACSB by the local representative who asked that the Community Board intercede, which it did. The prinicpal was not transferred.

While this example is not unique, it is not common either, since the ACSB has only recently become involved in issues regarding staffing. However, if the freeze on hiring continues within the District, it is likely, as one board member expressed it "that we (the ACSB) will have to become involved more and more in issues which concern the transfer of administrators."

Academic/Administrative Issues:

In the past year, the ACSB has only been confronted with one specific issue which pertained to academic/administrative concerns. This issue, to which reference was made in the first section of this report, concerned the case of a principal who wished to change the hours during which school would be open. Implementation of such a policy would have necessitated dismissing students from school at a later hour than had previously been the case. Utilizing the formal communications structures open to them, parents on the Local Board instructed their representative to bring the matter before the Community Board. Since the Regional Superintendent regularly attends ACSB meetings, and since this issue was clearly within the purview shared by him and the board, the concern was satisfactorily resolved within the context of the ACSB.

While the above represents the single instance of ACSB's having to deal with this kind of issue, it is likely that, in the forseeable future such issues will become more common, because, as on board member said "we have proven that we can take care of the Buildings and Grounds stuff...now we're going to get involved in the whole area of academic quality and progress."

This discussion has revealed that, in the past, most of the issues brought before the ACSB pertained to Buildings and Grounds. It has also indicated that many such issues, which should reach the board through regular, formal communications channels never do as an informal communications network is often utilized. The discussion also stressed that, while Buildings and Grounds-related issues have accounted for most of the time ACSB has devoted to local concern, the latter has started to become involved with resolving local problems related to staffing and academic/administrative matters.

What Actions does the ACSB take in attempting to resolve problems brought before it, and how successful are these actions?:

The ACSB numbers among its members several people who are very influential in both Region I and District System in general. Certainly the Regional Superintendent, who regularly attends meetings is the most visibly influential participant on the board, yet there are others who are not only influential in their own right, but have influential friends as well. The point of stressing the influence inherent in the composition of the ACSB is simply to indicate that the latter is a powerful body, and often capable of resolving local concerns among its own membership. In cases where the membership is not able, by itself to resolve pressing issues the former possesses ample expertise in knowing where to go to get things done. Given the power and influence which resides in the ACSB's membership the response of the Community Board to different categories of issues vary by the kinds of concerns being addressed. The actions taken by the ACSB in relation to different categories of issues are described below.

Actions Taken In Relation to Buildings and Grounds Issues:

Since Buildings and Grounds issues constitute the bulk of concerns brought before the ACSB by Local Boards, the former devised a strategy to deal with such concerns en masse. Basically this strategy entailed convening a lengthy meeting of key individuals within the District School System who are responsible for expenditures of funds relating to Buildings and Grounds; in additon to these individuals the meeting also included a representative from the City Department of General Services and members of the District Board of Education. During this meeting, which lasted for five hours, every issue pertaining to Buildings and Grounds which had been brought before the ACSB was presented and discussed in detail. All but one of these issues

were resolved at that meeting, and necessary repairs to local school facilities were undertaken. In the one case where resolution could not be reached, the ACSB decided to make a presentation directly to the District School Board. Subsequent to this presentation the needed repairs were made.

The strategy as described above proved so successful that the ACSB appointed a Buildings and Grounds committee which was charged with the follow-up of all local concerns in this area that had been brought to the Board's attention. The formation of this committee led, in turn, to the generation of important contacts with key individuals in the Buildings and Grounds Department of the District School System. These contacts are constantly utilized, and permit the ACSB to regularly monitor their own progress in meeting the needs of Local Boards in relation to these issues.

The formal structure then, set up by the ACSB to deal with Buildings and Grounds issues of local concerns has been successful. The ACSB thinks that it has "proved we can do something for Local Board members." The Local Board members in turn, feel that the ACSB has managed to effectuate the resolution of such issues that the Local Boards were unable to resolve, as the following composite quotation indicates:

> "They (the ACSB) have gotten alot of this stuff done that we tried to do and couldn't...they have better contacts than we do...It's probably better to let them handle the really big things..."

Unfortunately however, there are, according to our interview data and observations, dozens of similar issues which are never brought before the ACSB either because the local representative does not consider them important, or because he/she is not sufficiently vocal. In these instances then, though through no fault of their own, the ACSB has not been as fully responsive to local needs as it potentially could have been.

Actions Taken in Response to Staffing Issues:

Local concerns related to staffing are always resolved within the context of the ACSB membership. As a rule, the reason that these matters are brought before the ACSB is that Local Boards are fully aware that the Regional Superintendent attends the meetings. The ACSB functions, in these cases, as a forum for the explanation of the problem which, when discussed is then resolved by the Regional Superintendent. Most of the ACSB members interviewed, as well as members of the Local Boards expressed their belief that the Regional Superintendent takes appropriate action on these issues whenever he can. They also state that, in cases where the Superintendent feels that there is nothing which he can do, he is very careful to explain the reasons why, in his view, nothing can be done. The following composite quotation, excerpted from interviews with both ACSB members and members of Local Boards is illustrative of this perception:

> "He (the Superintendent) really tries to do something about these problems... usually he can do something...even if it's not exactly what we wanted... When he can't do anything at least...he tells us why and...it's usually pretty reasonable..."

Actions Taken In Response to Academic/Administrative Issues:

As mentioned previously, the ACSB dealt with only one issue during the past year which concerned academic or administrative problems at the local level. As was the case above, the ACSB served, in this instance as a forum for the discussion of the problem, which was resolved, during the meeting, by the Regional Superintendent.

The Primary Policy Reconsidered:

We began this section by addressing a general ACSB policy which stated that the Community Board would deal with concerns brought before them by Local School Boards because such concerns were not soluable at the local level. In the case of Buildings

and Grounds issues brought before them through formal channels, the ACSB has been sensitive to and effective in dealing with local concerns. To the extent that these formal channels have deteriorated, or are not used as a consistent conduit, the sensitivity and effectiveness of the ACSB in relation to staffing have been handled effectively, though the Community Board has only recently become involved in such issues. Finally, in the single issue pertaining to academic/administrative matters with which it dealt, the ACSB was also successful in its resolution. As previously suggested, the ACSB contemplates that, as time goes on, they will become more involved in substantive academic/administrative issues.

In general then, the ACSB, by virtue of its large sphere of influence and the power that such influence conveys; by virtue of its access to key individuals responsible for getting things done, and because of its unique relationship to the Regional Superintendent, is sent issues which fall beyond the jurisdiction and/or power of the local schools. The ACSB in many cases serves to bring salient issues to the attention of important officials and to mobilize its strong contacts in the District School System's administrative hierarchy to generate action in cases where individuals have failed at the local level. Our interviews with ACSB members also indicate that the ACSB has actively encouraged Local School Boards to devote more time to solving their own problems before bringing them before the larger board. ACSB members feel that as Local Board members gain more expertise in problem solution and in relating to the administrative structure of the local schools and increasingly large number of issues will be resolved at the local level. Our data further suggest that a majority of the ACSB members perceive the larger board as performing a training function, in that, through their participation in ACSB meetings, local representatives will in turn be able to teach their constituents to operate relatively autonomously. Once this has occurred, the ACSB feels it can begin to become

more involved with the formulation of educational policies at a Regional level.

The discussions presented in this section of the report warrant the following conclusions:

- o most of the issues brought before the ACSB for resolution concern Buildings and Grounds, these issues are usually successfully resolved
- o the formal communications procedures designed to facilitate the bringing of concerns to the attention of the ACSB work when they are utilized
- o the informal communications networks which are often utilized to bring matters before selected members of the ACSB, while effective in resolving certain issues, decrease the sensitivity of the ACSB to local concerns by circumventing the board
- o as a rule, the ACSB has not dealt with academic/administrative issues, though it plans to become more involved in such issues in the future
- o in those instances where staffing issues have been brought before the ACSB they have, for the most part, been successfully resolved

The overarching conclusion which may be drawn from this section is that the ACSB is generally sensitive to local concerns when such concerns are brought to their attention. It is noteworthy however that most of the issues brought before the ACSB do not directly relate to RENP. The reason for this is simply that most of the issues with which the Community Board deals relate to facilities, not to the quality of academic programs. It is likely however that, as ACSB increases its involvement in the issues pertaining to the quality of education in the Region, they will deal with more issues pertaining specifically to RENP.

Recommendations:

The major problem for the ACSB in remaining sensitive and responsive to the concerns of Local Boards centers around the fact that in many cases the larger board is never made aware of such concerns, even when the latter represent appropriate

issues on which the ACSB could act. To ameliorate this problem, we offer the following recommendations:

- o that a sub-committee of the ACSB be formed and charged with reviewing on a monthly basis, the minutes of the meetings of every Local School Board to determine whether issues were raised at those meetings which are appropriate for discussion at the level of the ACSB
- o that the ACSB strongly urge each of the Local School Boards to adhere to the formal communications networks designed for the purpose of bringing issues of local concern before the ACSB
- o that the ACSB require each of the Local School Boards to submit regular progress reports detailing the number and types of issues with which each Board has dealt and their success in resolving such issues
- o that the minutes of all public, regularly scheduled ACSB meetings be circulated to all Local Boards such that the latter will be kept fully informed about ACSB policies, actions and decisions

Policy Facilitative Strategies in Evidence: Of the ten strategies described in the first chapter of this report, we believe that the following were operational in regard to this policy: 1) Value Orientation of Policy - For the most part this policy was congruent with the historical mandate of the Local School Boards, and with the values of those most responsible for implementing the decision (ie. local board chairpeople, members of the ACSB, principals, and parents). As we have noted in the body of this section however, some principals and parents operated along value dimensions which made them tend to circumvent the formal procedures implied by this policy. 2) Self-Interest - In most cases, it is apparent that local school board members perceived that adherence to this policy was in their own self-interest, in that the ACSB was often capable of effecting necessary changes at the local level which the Local School Boards acting unilaterally, would have been unable to accomplish. 3) Non-Contradiction - In so far as we could determine, after reviewing existing policies, this policy did not contradict any other policy which had been generated by the ACSB. 4) Breadth of Participation - Since this policy originated within the RENP Committee, and was then discussed and adopted by the larger board,

the Local Boards were given the opportunity to participate in the formulation and/or adoption of this policy through their representatives to the ACSB. 5) Legitimacy of Authority - No one whom we interviewed, including parents, principals, or other members of Local School Boards, questioned the right of the Anacostia Community School Board to set this policy. Those instances in which the policy was circumvented on the part of either principals or parents had more to do with efficiency or pragmatism than with questioning the legitimate exercise of authority.

The Third Policy: "The Unit Task Forces at each school shall include in their composition at least three parents and one student, to provide direct input from the community to RENP."

What Does it Mean?: The Unit Task Force concept was developed by RENP program planners as a means for adapting the RENP service delivery system to the particular needs of individual schools. Ideally, each Unit Task Force should devise a plan which adapts the services which RENP provides to the overarching and idiosynchratic educational programs offered at a given school. The Unit Task Forces are constituted of a wide variety of school-related personnel including teachers, aides, Community Organizers, Trainers of Teachers, and Mathematics and Reading Specialists. To ensure that the Task Forces would recieve input from the community, parents and students were added to the membership. Our intent in studying this policy was to determine whether or not the parental and student components of the Task Forces did, in fact, provide regular input from the community.

Related sub-issues: In examining the policy stated above, the following sub-issues, stated here as questions were also studied:

- o How many schools have fully constituted Unit Task Forces?
- o How were parents and students recruited to serve on the Unit Task Forces?
- o What kinds of input do parents and students make?

By answering the questions delineated above, the contractor felt that the policy could be studied comprehensively. Unfortunately, as the discussions which follow

will reveal, neither the questions nor the policy itself could be studied in the depth with which the preceding two policies were examined.

Who generated the policy?: As was the case with the other two policies, this policy was initially generated within the RENP Committee, and later discussed and adopted by the larger Anacostia Community School Board. The policy was generated out of a concern that within any given school, RENP be responsive to the needs and concerns of its clients.

How was the policy communicated?: As was the case in the other two instances, communication of this policy depended upon verbal rather than written procedures. That is, the policy was verbally presented to the ACSB which then verbally approved it. We could find no written record of such approval. The policy was communicated to the Local School Boards both through the latter's representatives on the ACSB and by key members of the RENP staff.

Data Collection Strategies: It was our intent, in studying this policy to supplement extensive interview data with observations of Unit Task Force meetings. Unfortunately, this did not prove feasible since, during the time that data were collected for this study we were able to observe only two Unit Task Force meetings which, insofar as we could determine, were the only meetings scheduled during the time of data collection. Field notes were kept in relation to these meetings however and the observations centered upon comments made by parents. At the two meetings which we observed, students were not in attendance. In addition to the limited observations, interviews were conducted with nine parental members serving on six different Unit Task Forces. More extensive interviews with parents were planned, but the remaining parents could not be contacted during the time of data collection. Finally, all Community Organizers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of parental input as were all principals.

As in the previous two policies studied data were analyzed through the use of a content analysis technique which permitted response categories to fall naturally from the data. Subsequently, frequency tabulations by response category and categories of Unit Task Force membership were performed. The reader will note that no students were interviewed. While such interviews were contemplated, they did not prove feasible as we were unable to locate any students who had participated in Unit Task Force meetings.

What do the Data Indicate?: Our data suggest that, for the most part, parents do participate in Unit Task Force meetings when and as such meetings are held. The data also strongly suggest that students do not attend such meetings regularly, if at all. The factors which impinge upon students' non-participation will emerge in the examination of the related sub-issues which follows.

How Many Schools Have Fully Constituted Unit Task Forces?:

As simple as this question seems, it is not an easy one to answer, for the data are sketchy and often contradictory. According to our interviews with parents and the Community Organizers and our perusal of the Unit Task Force Plans, twelve of the fifteen Phase I schools have three parents serving on the Unit Task Forces and ten of the fifteen have students included in the membership. Interviews with parents however suggest that in over fifty percent of the cases in which a parent is identified as a member of a Unit Task Force, the parent is unaware of such membership. Often, in such cases, parents identify themselves as being members of the Local School Boards but not the Unit Task Forces. In still other cases parents identified themselves as being Local School Board representatives to the Unit Task Forces, but not voting members of the Task Forces. While it is clear that in most schools some parents are voting members of the Task Forces, the number of parents on each of the

Task Forces was, at the time of our data collection, impossible to determine.

In the case of student membership the picture is even less clear. As mentioned previously two thirds of the schools have indicated in their Unit Task Force plans that students are Task Force members. Interviews with parents, principals and Community Organizers however, all of whom are reluctant to address the topic directly, suggest that in reality, student participation is at best very sporadic, and not encouraged, and at worst, does not exist. These interviews further suggest that, at least among the parents, Community Organizers and principals whom we interview, no one was quite sure why students were to have been included as members of the Unit Task Forces in the first place. One principal summarized the dilemma of many of those to whom we spoke, in saying the following:

> "I don't know why they (referent undetermined) insisted that we have students on these things in the first place...What does a child know about educational planning anyway?...I don't want a sixth grade child helping to make educational policies..."

To summarize the points made above, it is unclear how many schools have "fully constituted" Unit Task Forces. If, as the plans suggest, the concept of "fully constituted" entails the inclusion of three parents and a student, it is possible that none of the Task Forces are fully constituted. This does not mean that they are non-operational; merely that they might not have the full complement of membership which the plans call for.

How Were Parents and Students Recruited to Serve on the Unit Task Forces?:

Our interview data indicate that there are twelve Phase I schools in which the Unit Task Forces have met at least twice over the past academic year. In ten of these twelve schools parents and principals agree that the latter asked specific parents to participate on the Task Forces. In the other two cases, parents were recruited by the Community Organizers. In all of the twelve schools, regardless of

who recruited the parents, the latter were selected primarily from the membership rosters of the Local School Boards. This suggests that parental participation on the two most potentially powerful community related groups in the schools (the Local School Board and the Unit Task Forces) tends to be somewhat insular in that the same groups of parents tend to serve on both bodies. Principals and Community Organizers, while agreeing with this contention, argued that they tried to select those parents whom they knew to be the most "active and dependable parents in the school," and these usually were Local School Board members. We are aware of four exceptions this rule. These exceptions relate to parents who either specifically requested to participate or who volunteered, when asked.

In many cases, principals, in recruiting parents to serve as Unit Task Force members, simply told parental members of their Local School Boards that their participation on the Task Forces was a condition of their duties as Local School Board members. The point is simply that there are rarely any discontinuities between parental membership on the Local School Boards and membership on the Unit Task Forces. When asked, in interviews, whether they thought having the same people serving on both Unit Task Forces and Local School Boards might be detrimental to the principle of a broad spectrum of community representation, principals were ambivalent. The following quotation, which is a composite drawn from interviews with five principals is illustrative of their reactions to this question:

> "It does mean that a smaller number of...parents are actively involved...but these are...the most active parents in the school anyhow...Maybe it's good that the same people sit on the Task Forces and the Local Boards...because they can understand the whole picture...not just what we're trying to do with RENP...but they can put that into the larger picture of what we're trying to do in the school in general..."

If the original intent of the policy was, as some ACSB members contend, to ensure as wide a range as possible of community input, then the recruitment processes have

not been successful. If, as principals contend on the other hand, they actively tried to recruit parents whom they knew would participate, and in so doing were forced to fall back upon Local Board members with the only other alternative being a lack of parental involvement, then the decision was sound. Principals acknowledged that the range of community input would be limited. Conversely, they felt, some input is better than none at all.

What Kinds of Input do Parents and Students Make?:

As stated previously, our data suggest that students have little or no input into the Unit Task Forces. While not anxious to discuss the issue, those parents whom we did interview reflected the sentiments of the principals which was mentioned earlier; namely that students should not have an input into educational planning. The following quotation, which is a composite of two interviews conducted with parents, is illustrative of the viewpoints of the six parents who would express any opinions at all in relation to this matter:

> "Teachers and principals are professionals, they know what they are doing... parents have been through school before and have been out in the world for awhile...but how can students have the experience to make educational plans... it's ridiculous...a child in fourth grade is just too immature...he doesn't know enough..."

The characteristics of parental input are difficult to define. Such input seems to vary from school to school and almost from meeting to meeting. Our interviews with parents, principals and Community Organizers suggests that parental attendance at Unit Task Force meetings is highly sporadic and further indicates that in many cases parents are confused about the purposes of the Task Forces. Most of the twelve schools with active Task Forces had, at the time of data collection, held from two to three meeting over the course of the year. Insofar as we could determine, usually one parent attended each of the meetings, though most frequently the same parent

did not attend subsequent meetings. This suggests that there may be a strong discontinuity regarding parental input. On the basis of available data, we could find only two parents who had attended more than one Unit Task Force meeting. The situation may have changed somewhat since then however since, during most of our data collection, Unit Task Force plans were still being updated and several of the Unit Task Forces were in the process of being reconstituted.

As stated above, it is difficult to generalize about the kinds of input made by parents into the Unit Task Forces. Most of the principals and parents interviewed however said that they had "discussed" the goals presented in the Unit Task Force plans with members of the Unit Task Forces. This does not, of course mean that the parents actually had any input into the formulation of these goals. Principals for the most part contended that parents did have such input. Parents, by and large contended that they did not help formulate the goals, but that the latter were "presented" to them, for what purpose is unclear.

Of the nine parents interviewed, only two indicated that they had actually had input into the Unit Task Force; one stated that she had helped other Task Force members formulate a plan for evaluating student progress, and another stated that she had worked with other Task Force members to develop strategies to monitor the implementation of the Unit Task Force plan at her school Conversely, all of the principals and Community Organizers stated that parents provided regular input into such diverse areas as setting educaitonal goals, developing strategies to monitor the implementation of plans, deciding what materials to purchase, helping to design mathematics laboratories, and helping to determine what additional components were needed as part of a mathematics curriculum.

The Primary Policy Reconsidered:

The clear intent of the original policy was that parents and students would serve as active participants on the Unit Task Forces. It seems reasonably certain that students do not participate on a regular basis, nor is their participation desired. It is also clear that while parents do participate to some extent, the intensity and continuity of their participation remains uncertain. It seems reasonable to conclude in the light of the above, that the policy, while implemented to some extent, has not been either fully implemented nor operationally defined. Admittedly the data collected in relation to this policy are incomplete, yet the available evidence suggests the following as tentative conclusions:

- o students do not participate on the Unit Task Forces and their participation is not perceived as desirable by principals or parents
- o parents who serve as members of the Unit Task Forces also tend to serve as members of the Local School Boards
- o parental attendance at Unit Task Force meetings is sporadic, and the same parents do not attend each meeting
- o most of the schools do not have fully constituted Unit Task Forces
- o the Unit Task Forces do not receive regular input from a broad range of community residents

Recommendations:

Presuming that the original intent of the policy relating to Unit Task Force membership still holds, we make the following recommendations:

- o that the notion of student participation be seriously re-examined at all levels of the RENP system
- o that the Local School Board at each school be required to submit regular monitoring reports of Unit Task Force meetings to the ACSB documenting that meetings were held, who attended, and what decisions if any were made
- o that the Community Organizers be encouraged to work with principals to develop a wider base of parental membership in the Unit Task Forces
- o that members of the RENP management staff attend meetings of the Unit Task Forces on a sampling basis to assure themselves that parents do attend meetings, and are making inputs

Policy Facilitative Strategies in Evidence: In relation to this policy, we were able to observe only the following facilitative strategies: 1) Non-Contradiction - In so far as we could determine, having reviewed the minutes of the ACSB, this policy did not contradict any earlier policies which had been operationalized. 2) Breadth of Participation - As was the case with each of the other policies, this policy was generated within the RENP Committee and then ratified and discussed by the larger Anacostia Community School Board. Therefore, each of the Local Boards, through its representative, did have the opportunity to participate in the generation and/or discussion and ratification of the policy.

Implications of Policy Facilitative Strategies: The preceding discussions of the three policies which were examined as part of this study suggest that there is a definite relationship between the number of policy facilitative strategies employed by the ACSB and the likelihood of successful policy implementation. The reader will note for example, that the first policy, which was the most successfully implemented also employed the greatest number of facilitative strategies. The second policy, though implemented, was operationalized to a lesser degree than was the first, and also had a fewer number of facilitative strategies which were related to it. Finally, the last policy, which was the most poorly implemented of all of those examined also had the fewest number of facilitative strategies related to it. While examination of three policies from an entire spectrum of policies which could have been examined do not in an absolute sense constitute grounds for generalizations regarding policy implementation, they do strongly suggest that in generating policies which it wishes to see implemented, that the Anacostia Community School Board simultaneously generate facilitative strategies to help ensure smooth implementation.